

**Jason Williams**

**February 28, 2023**

Hello, Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

I am Jason Williams and I am a registered voter in the city of Stamford. I am a member of Bridge House in Bridgeport. Bridge House is a mental health program that serves adults like me who are living with mental health conditions. What I love the most about Bridge House is that this program is a FAMILY. The staff didn't give me an "Impression" but rather a "Reality" that they are more than willing to help and listen patiently. However, I easily understood that the staff are here to help and not force or put all the weight on themselves. I absorbed quickly that although we are like a strong network, Jason has to be willing to help Jason.

I have been diagnosed with several mental illnesses beginning 29 years ago. This has resulted in or produced over 20 hospitalizations. On one unfortunate occasion I was released and in less than 5 hours I was readmitted. At that time, I was discharged at 11:00am and was readmitted at 4:00pm. Like I mentioned earlier, family is very important to me and they deserve a lot of credit. They are tolerant and understanding of my situation. My stepfather left South One, which is the inpatient unit at Stamford Hospital, so my father could come to visit me. Also, my aunt and mother departed while my stepmother was entering. This is the same treatment, respect and love I receive from Bridge House.

Now I can describe my experience with the members. We all have "Challenges" but not once did one member appear conceited, judgmental or selfish. I found that they are willing to listen, and to assist YOUR situation. I have been offered to exchange numbers, if I ever needed to talk. Bridge House is a combination of love, faith and creativity. I love how we learn about each other's cultures, for we just learned about important contributions in Black History; but as far as Bridge House is concerned, it is History. There are so many opportunities where there is always a space to help out that increases my self-esteem.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before your committee.